

Brown House
1404 35th Street, N.W.
(Georgetown)
Washington
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-191

HABS,
DC,
GEO,
127-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

BROWN HOUSE

Location: 1404 35th Street, N.W., (Georgetown), Washington,
District of Columbia.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Willaim Earle Bradley (1969).

Present User: Private Residence (1969).

Significance: This free-standing town house is one of the earliest
in the west end of Georgetown. It has been carefully
restored to maintain many of the original details
while unobtrusively providing modern conveniences.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1791.
2. Architect: None known.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: The building is located in
Square 1247, lot 847 (formerly Square 77, lot 99 in
Threlkeld's Addition to Georgetown). Its original address
was 55 Fayette Street. The following is an incomplete chain
of title to the land on which the structure stands.
Reference is to the office of the Recorder of Deeds,
Washington, D.C.

1791 John Threlkeld to William Brown. Deed May 16, 1791.
Recorded May 16, 1791. Montgomery County, Md. Liber
D-4, folio 598.

1792 William Brown dies January 11, 1792. Will and
Codicil November 24, 1791. Probated July 19, 1792.
Arlington County. Records 1786-1800, Wills (Virginia
State Library, Richmond, Virginia).

1815 Gustavus A. Brown to William Grayson. Deed October
30, 1815. Recorded December 28, 1815. Liber AK-35,
folio 420.

"Conveys a certain two-story brick house and lot known as No. 99 in Threlkeld's Addition to Georgetown..."

1816 William Grayson to John W. Bronaugh. Deed September 18, 1815. Recorded October 18, 1816. Liber AM-37, folio 19.

1819 John W. Bronaugh to Thomas G. Muncure. Deed in Trust January 23, 1819. Recorded June 11, 1819. Liber AV-46, folio 58.

Robert Kerby & William Clagett vs. John Bronaugh
James Melvin vs. John Bronaugh
Charles B. Robertson & Joseph Jackson vs. John Bronaugh
Leonard M. Deakins & Thomas Cramplin vs. John Bronaugh

"...to secure payment of all fees and costs due by defendant within 30 days, and if not then paid the property conveyed in trust which is to be the house and lot of defendant on Fayette Street in Georgetown, to be sold after a week's notice by advertisement in the Messenger to the highest bidder for cash and the money to be applied as aforesaid, expenses of sale and reasonable commission to trustee to be first deducted from purchase money and the balance after paying as above to be paid to said Bronaugh."

1819 Thomas G. Muncure, Trustee to Joseph Jackson. Deed June 14, 1819. Recorded July 3, 1819. Liber AV-46, folio 171.

1831 Joseph Jackson dies, devises to wife Rachael all real and personal property, with an uncontrolled power of disposing of same. Will September 22, 1826. Probated May 30, 1831. Will Book 4, page 86. Administration 8592.

1851 Rachael Jackson to William O'Brien. Deed June 26, 1851. Recorded July 2, 1851. Liber JAS 26, folio 30.

1853 William O'Brien to Richard P. Jackson. Trust April 7, 1853. Recorded April 15, 1853. Liber JAS 53, folio 498. Secures Thomas J. Magruder \$1695.80, power to sell or default in payment.

- 1854 Richard P. Jackson, 1st party; William O'Brien et ux Mary, 2nd party; Mary R. Bibb (wife of George M.), 3rd party to Lewis Carberry, 4th party. Deed in Trust June 27, 1854. Recorded December 21, 1875. Liber 809, folio 7.

Recites that party of the first part has sold property (agreeably to directions in deed of April 7, 1853) to party of third part in trust for the sole and separate use of said party of the third part and to permit her to occupy and enjoy the same and receive the rents and profits thereof free from the control or intermeddling of her present or any future husband and without being liable for his debts or engagements.

- 1875 Mary R. Bibb, devises property to her son, George Laurence Alexander Dyer, for and during his natural life and then to George Alphonsus Dyer, his present child, and any other children born to him. Will October 8, 1874. Probated October 19, 1875. Will Book 19, page 142.

- 1881 Richard P. Jackson, Trustee, 1st party; George A. Dyer, 2nd party to Rebecca A. Martin, 3rd party. Deed September 20, 1881. Recorded October 4, 1881. Liber 985, folio 141.

Recites that by Decree in Equity of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia #7679 (passed September 15, 1881) in which George A. Dyer was plaintiff and Shoemaker et al defendants--Richard P. Jackson was appointed trustee in place of Lewis Carberry, deceased--premises sold to part of third part.

- 1885 Rebecca A. Martin dies, February 21, 1885. Will September 30, 1884. Probated May 22, 1885. Will Book 22, page 195. Administration 1975.

Devises property to her mother and father (James and Jane E. Martin) during their natural lives and upon death of both to her sisters, Lavinnia Patterson and Sarah E. Reynolds.

- 1941 Frank M. Young and wife, Ruth E.; James E. Young, unmarried (devises under Will of Lavinnia Patterson) Mary Elizabeth Reynolds; Elsie V. Reynolds; Walter Martin Reynolds & wife, Lillian; Lelia R. Metzger (formerly Lelia Rebecca Reynolds) (sold heirs-at-law of Sarah E. Reynolds) to Susan Jay. Deed May 21, 1941. Recorded June 9, 1941. Liber 7625, folio 185.
- 1951 Susan Jay to James Graham Parsons and wife, Margaret J., tenants by the entirety. Deed May 7, 1951. Recorded June 21, 1951. Liber 9496, folio 56
- 1956 James Graham Parsons and wife, Margaret J. to Armand W. Harkless and wife, Lucille E., tenants by the entirety. Deed January 31, 1956. Recorded February 29, 1956. Liber 10611, folio 449.
- 1957 Armand W. Harless and wife, Lucille to Louise M. Redmond. Deed November 5, 1957. Recorded November 13, 1957. Liber 10952, folio 293.
- 1957 Louise M. Redmond to Lucille Harkless. Deed November 5, 1957. Recorded November 13, 1957. Liber 10952, folio 295.
- 1959 Lucille Harkless and husband, Armand W. to Marie W. Mongan. Deed March 16, 1959. Recorded April 3, 1959. Liber 11215, folio 579.
- 1959 Marie E. Mongan and Wilbur Mongan, her husband, to William Earle Bradley and Virginia Meyer Bradley, his wife. Deed August 10, 1959. Recorded August 26, 1959. Liber 11297, folio 89
4. Alterations and additions: The front porch appears to be of a slightly later date than the original house. In 1941, Susan Jay hired Mrs. Margaret Weller to restore the house. Mrs. Weller described the restoration in 1968. At the time of the restoration, the house had no plumbing, and was heated by fire wood burning fireplaces. Bathrooms were installed at the ends of the third and fourth floor hallways. A two story rectangular addition was created at the rear of the house by raising the brick walls of what was the "out-house" (in use in 1941). A coat closet and powder room were installed on the second floor of this addition. According to Mrs. Weller, the present (1968) architectural details were those she found in 1941. The heating system was added in 1941 or later.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Browns of Virginia came of a distinguished Scottish family. Dr. William Brown is grandfather, Dr. Gustavus Brown, came to Maryland at age nineteen in 1708 as a ships surgeon and remained in the Colony to practice medicine. William Brown's father, the Reverend Richard Brown, was educated at the University of Edinburgh and ordained in the Church of England July 9, 1750, by the Lord Bishop of London.

Dr. William Brown's early education was at King and Queen parish, St. Mary's County, Maryland. His parents then sent him to Scotland where his grandfather owned lands. In 1770 he received his M.D. at the University of Edinburgh with the thesis "De Viribus Atmosphurae." (Hayden) Returning to Virginia he settled in Alexandria and married his cousin, Catherine Scott, whose father was the Reverend James Scott, an Episcopal Rector in Virginia. (Meade)

Dr. Brown supported Washington in the American Revolution. He served from September to December 1776 as surgeon to the Second Virginia Regiment under Colonel Woodford. He succeeded Dr. Benjamin Rush as Surgeon-General to the Middle Department of the Army, on May 13, 1777. On February 6, 1778 he became Physician and Director-General "...to superintend the practice of physick in the Army Hospitals..." (Dictionary of American Biography, p. 157)

During this time Dr. Brown wrote in Latin the first American pharmacopia. His work was based upon the Scottish pharmacopia and intended for use in the colonial army hospitals where drugs were scarce at the time. (Chapman) In 1780 he resigned from the Army because of ill health. Brown was granted seven thousand acres of military bounty land in the western country. (Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia, October 1782, p. 11, 24)

After retiring from military service, Brown returned to Alexandria Virginia where he lived and practiced medicine. About 1791 he entered into a partnership with Dr. Gustavus B. Campbell "...for carrying on the practice of Phisick and the business of selling drugs..." (Arlington County, Complete Records, 1786-1800, pp. 59-71) In the spring and summer of the same year he purchased lot 99 in Georgetown from his cousin John Threlkeld, and built Brown House. The Virginia physician evidently intended to reside, at least part time, in the Federal city to be, but there is no documentary evidence that he ever occupied his Georgetown house.

Dr. Brown died in Alexandria on January 11, 1792. He was buried at "Preston" the estate of his kinsman, Charles Alexander.

In 1916, his grave was relocated at Pohick Church cemetery in Virginia (Chapman). Gustavus, the youngest son, was bequeathed the quarter in Fairfax County and "...also to my son Gustavus my house and Lott in Threlkeld's Addition to Georgetown with all the appurtenances..." (Arlington County, Complete Records, 1786-1800, pp.59-71).

Catherine Brown, although quite young when her husband died, never remarried and eventually went to live in Fairfax County. The tax records for Georgetown show that Catherine Brown paid the taxes for the house on Fayette Street in 1808 although her son, Gustavus Alexander Brown, was the legal owner. (Records of the City of Georgetown, (D.C.), 1800-79, Roll 8).

It is not known who occupied Brown House during the twenty-three years between 1792 and 1815. Since housing was in great demand while the Federal city was being constructed, it is probable that the house was rented.

John Bronaugh, a former Virginia planner, who purchased the house in 1816, also purchased Lots 101, 102, 103, and 110 from John Threlkeld, thus acquiring one half of the present Square 1247. Heavily in debt to many in Georgetown, Bronaugh sold Brown House in 1819 at public auction to Joseph Jackson, a Georgetown grocer living on Bridge Street (now M Street). (City Directory, 1830, p. 9; 1834, p. 10).

In 1854 Mary Bibb purchased Brown House. Her husband George Bibb came from Kentucky, where he had spent thirteen years as Chief Justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, to serve nine years in the U.S. Senate. In 1844, he was Secretary of the Treasury under President Tyler. After his service in the Federal government George Bibb remained in the Capital to practice law. Judge Bibb was known as a fine scholar and a mathematician. He enjoyed gardening and developed a variety of lettuce, now popularly known as "Bibb lettuce." (Whitley, pp. 328-329).

After Judge Bibb's death in 1859 his wife, and family continued to live at 55 Fayette Street until the Civil War. The next occupants were the Joseph Bartons who rented the house until 1868. (City Directory, 1864, p. 294; 1868, p. 98) Mr. Barton was an official with the Treasury Department; it was report that

the marriage of "his beautiful and talented daughter" to the son of Baron de Bodisco was one of the social events of the year 1865, "attended by Cabinet officers and foreign diplomats." (Georgetown, D.C.)

William T. Herron, a contractor who had built and lived in the mansion on the corner one block north at Third (now P Street) and Fayette (now 35th Street), moved into Brown House with his family in 1869 and lived there for one year. (City Directory, 1867, p. 313; 1868, p. 108; 1869, p. 82) After Mary Bibb's death in 1875, her son, George Laurence Alexander Dyer held the property for six years. In 1881 he sold it to Rebecca Martin, a clerk in the Treasury Department. Rebecca Martin died in 1885 and left the property to her parents, James and Jane Martin, who lived in the house from 1882 until 1896.

Their daughter Lavinnia Patterson, widow, is listed in the Washington City Directory as residing at 1404 35th Street from 1917 to 1940, the year she died. (City Directory, 1917, p. 945; 1940, p. 1013)

In 1941 Susan Jay (Mrs. Peter Jay) purchased Brown House as an investment and commissioned Mrs. Margaret Weller to restore the house. At the time of Mrs. Weller's initial inspection two very aged ladies occupied the house. (Conversation with Mrs. Margaret Weller) During World War II Mrs. Jay's daughter (now Mrs. Joseph Alsop) lived in the house for about two years. Then it was rented to a series of tenants until 1951 when it was sold, (Conversation with Mrs. Peter Jay) to Mr. and Mrs. Graham Parsons. In 1956 they sold it to Mr. and Mrs. Armand Harkless. Neither the Parsons nor the Harklesses lived in the house. Three years later, in 1959, the Harklesses deeded the property to Mrs. Harkless's daughter, Marie E. Mongan, who sold it a few months later to Mr. and Mrs. William Earle Bradley. Careful maintenance in harmony with the eighteenth-century original has been undertaken by the present owners to preserve this early structure.

C. Sources of Information

1. Bibliography

a. Primary and unpublished sources

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Prepared by Volunteers
for the Commission of Fine Arts
Washington, D.C.
1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A late eighteenth-century house retaining many original details despite modernizations by successive owners. The unusually high basement and the proximity to the street give the house a towering effect.
2. Condition of fabric: Both are exterior and interior are in very good condition and are well-maintained. Mid-twentieth century kitchen and bathrooms have been unobtrusively integrated into the existing structure.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 20 by 30 feet. Three bays across 35th Street facade. Two-and-a-half stories high with unusually high basement and large finished attic story. Small rectangular two-story addition on rear.
2. Foundations: Brick
3. Wall construction: Brick with later stucco covering.
4. Porches: Twelve granite steps curve up to a 6'-0" by 6'-0" landing at the front door, supported by two square columns of the same material. The handrail is of wrought iron in a simple ornamental design.
5. Chimneys: Two exterior on south side; no exterior projections.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Main entry door in north bay of east front is six panelled with four-light transom, panelled reveals, smooth pilasters on each side, and a large entablature. Service door to basement kitchen is at east end of south wall (possibly beneath main entry originally?) One further door in small rear addition from terrace to basement dining room.
 - b. Windows and shutters: With the exception of wood casement windows in attic, windows are generally double-hung wood sash. The basement has six-over-six light sash as do the first and second floors. The attic has two single-leaf casement windows on the south side and double-hung wood six-over-six-light sash in east and west dormers. Most windows have louvered shutters although only one original wrought-iron hold-back remains; others are cast iron.
7. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof with ridge running north-south; standing-seam metal cover.

- b. Framing: Wood.
- c. Cornice: Simple box cornice with ogee and bed-mould returned on itself; hanging metal gutter.
- d. Dormers: There are two gabled dormers on the front. They are of iron metal roofs.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: First floor has side hall on north, double parlor on south; stair is in rear (west) of hall separated from entry area by an archway; powder room in modern addition at rear of hall. Second floor has two bedrooms on south side, bath at east end of hall, stair at west end. Attic has two bedrooms on south side, bath at east end of hall, stair at west end. Basement has kitchen at southeast corner, dining room at southwest, storage room-laundry at northeast corner, and stairs at northwest corner. Door to rear terrace behind stairs in modern addition at rear. There is no partition between stair hall and dining room.
2. Stairways: All runs are closed-string construction with painted square wood balusters and stained molded wood rails. The general character is simple and direct; much appears to be original.
3. Flooring: Wide random-width pine flooring throughout, except basement, where kitchen has resilient floor covering and dining room has carpet.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Painted smooth plaster, with some wallpaper in bedrooms and dining room.
5. Doorways and doors: A variety of late eighteenth and nineteenth century panelled wood doors exist, the earliest being on the second floor, where the trim is also of an early date. Doors and trim on the first floor are slightly later in design and are probably replacements. The attic doors are of batten construction and for the most part are mid-nineteenth century additions.
6. Decorative features and trim: Door and window trim as noted above. Door and window trim on the second floor shows marked relationship to stair moldings. Molded wood cornice in the living room is Georgian in style and is probably a twentieth-

century addition, as are the archway in the hall and the built-in book cases in the living room.

7. Hardware: A variety of iron and brass rimlocks and mortise locks are present, but none is outstanding.
8. Lighting: All twentieth-century electric fixtures.
9. Heating: Twentieth-century boiler in screened area off kitchen, and fireplace.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The east front of the house faces 35th Street and is set back only slightly from the public sidewalk. The neighborhood is well-maintained and in character with the house.
2. Enclosures: Across the front of the property is an ornamental fence of both wrought iron and cast iron. The rear yard is enclosed by a wood fence.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: Brick.
5. Landscaping: Simple foundation planting in front; rear yard brick paved.

Prepared by The Office of
Walter G. Peter, Jr., AIA
Architect
October 30, 1968

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of a project to record structures in the western part of the Georgetown Historic District in Washington, D.C. The project was conducted by the Commission of Fine Arts with the cooperation of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The resulting documentation was donated to HABS by the Commission and published in 1970 in HABS Selections Number 6, "Georgetown Architecture - Northwest: Northwest Washington, District of Columbia." Research for the project was conducted by volunteers under the supervision of Ms. Nancy Black, staff member of the Commission of Fine Arts. Architectural information was prepared by the Office of Walter G. Peter, Jr., AIA. The photographs were taken by J. Alexander. The data was edited and prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS architectural historian Emily J. Harris in 1979.